

THE FLORA OF LIBYA PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

Libya is the only North African country that lacks a manual of its flora. Meanwhile, numerous books and papers have appeared on the subject. Some of these works provide lists of species of certain parts of the country (e. g. DURAND et BARRATTE, 1910; PAMPANINI, 1931; CORTI, 1942; KEITH, in press; etc.). Others cover, in the context of wider geographical areas, the whole country (e. g. MAIRE, 1952—1967) or parts of it (e. g. OZENDA, 1954).

As is the case with many African countries, the study of Libyan plants for the purpose of preparing a flora is not an easy task. This is mainly due to the shortage of literature and of rich collections deposited in the country. The vast national territory, which embraces some areas difficult to explore, provides another obstacle to making basic collections within a reasonable time.

PROGRESS IN THE PREPARATION OF THE LIBYAN FLORA

a. *Libyan collections.* Being in Libya since September 1966 (immediately after the VI A.E.T.F.A.T. Plenary Meeting in Uppsala), the author has been able to start a herbarium in the Botany Department of the Faculty of Science, University of Libya, Tripoli. Some 4,100 numbers have been collected, representing over 800 species, i. e. about 50 % of the species of the flora are now represented in the herbarium. These were mainly collected from Gebel Akhdar, Gebel Nefousa, the Tripoli area, Gebel Uweinat and the Oases of Kufra, Tazerbo and Jalu.

b. *Exchange program and foreign collections.* The aim of our exchange program is to get as many authentically determined specimens as possible from the Mediterranean region, especially North Africa.

Through the courtesy of the herbaria of Genève (G), Lund (LD) and Firenze (FI), we were able to obtain some valuable old specimens collected from Algeria, Tunisia and Libya.

Exchange of specimens with many herbaria has been established. New contacts are welcome.

Some 520 numbers were collected from Central and Northern Tunisia in the Spring of 1968. These were kindly determined by Dr. A. SCHOENENBERGER of Tunis.

c. *Literature.* A bibliography on the flora and vegetation of Libya and some allied subjects (such as forestry, horticulture, climatology, geography, travels, etc.) has been compiled (BOULOS, in press). This work comprises about 770 references. Of these most of the basic floras which deal with Libyan plants are present in the University Library. The majority of the papers mentioned in the bibliography are not however available in Libya.

THE REMAINING PHASE

During the years 1970—1973 collecting will be concentrated in the areas which have not yet been thoroughly explored, e. g. Gebel Uaddan, Gebel Ben Ghunaymah, Al Haruj Al Aswad, Al Hamada Al Hamra, Ubari, Ghat, Ghadames, Sebha, etc.

We are also planning to collect outside Libya, e. g. in the Marmarica region of Egypt where many species are comparable to the Mediterranean coastal flora of Libya.

Visits to the herbaria of Europe, especially those of Firenze, Kew, Paris and Genève will enable us to study the Libyan plants deposited there and to identify our specimens, making use of their rich collections and Libraries.

It is hoped that during the coming five years (Sept. 1970 — Sept. 1975) we shall be lucky enough to complete a flora of Libya.

The number of species is expected to be about 1,600 plus about 400 infraspecific epithets.

The first step will be the preparation of a check list compiled from the literature and the deposited material in the herbaria.

As almost all the works dealing with the Libyan flora have failed to give keys for the determination of the genera and species, the main purpose of our future flora will be the construction of good keys. For every family keys to the genera and species of each genus will be given. Short diagnostic descriptions of the genera and species will follow. Vernacular names of the species and their economic uses will be mentioned whenever known. The geographical distribution of every species within Libya will be mentioned with citations of certain specimens.

It is also hoped to include illustrations of certain critical species or details of their parts to facilitate determination.

As you see Ladies and Gentlemen, nothing has yet been published of the Flora of Libya in accordance with the above schema. Specialists are cordially invited to take part in the preparation of manuscripts of certain groups. Dr. H. SCHOLZ of Berlin-Dahlem, for example, will kindly provide a manuscript of Gramineae on which he is at present working.

After this short review, I should be delighted to listen to your comments and advice regarding the preparation of the Libyan flora, hoping that I have not been too ambitious in aiming to finish such a work within five years. If I have been so, it is because I count on getting a great deal of help and encouragement from my colleagues and friends who are interested in the preparation of this flora.

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